

Glenn, John
(original SALT)

Some Pepper for SALT

John Glenn tells Jimmy Carter to be tougher with Moscow

Just as Senator John Glenn was leaving his Maryland home two weeks ago for the airport, the phone rang. It was Jimmy Carter. His voice seething with anger, he told the Ohio Democrat that the strategic arms talks with Moscow were at a "very sensitive stage." Progress on them could be slowed, said Carter, if Glenn went ahead with a speech that he was planning to deliver at the launching of a nuclear submarine that day in Groton, Conn. What upset Carter was the Senator's intention to urge the Administration to be tougher with the Soviets on the crucial matter of how to verify that they play by the rules of SALT II.

While Glenn's wife waited in the car, Glenn and the President "went at it hammer and tongs," in Glenn's words. Said Glenn: "I have never talked to a President that way before and no President has talked that way to me before."

Was it not enough, Carter asked Glenn, that he had already assured Congressmen that verification would be adequate? For Glenn, it was not. But as the Senator later said, "When the President makes a personal plea to me, I have to honor that."

Thus when it came to launching the *Ohio*, the first of the Trident A-sub, at Electric Boat's Groton yard, the toughest thing Glenn said was, "Verification must be better defined ... or we risk having this vital treaty disapproved [by the Senate] or sent back to the President for further directed negotiating."

For the moment, Carter had won. Inexplicably, however, apparently no one informed the next speaker: Rosalynn Carter, who was there to weld her initials in the keel of the *Ohio*'s sister ship, the *Georgia*. Having been briefed in advance by staffers that Glenn might raise the subject of verification, she plowed ahead, reading from typed notes: "It is my feeling, and Senator Glenn understands this, that premature public debate on issues such as this can be very damaging." As for verification, she added, that is "too sensitive" to be publicly discussed.

An aide watching the normally mild-mannered Glenn said later: "His lips were blue they were so tight. If I know my man, that's just going to steel his determination to insist on his view of adequate verification." If so, Rosalynn Carter's rebuke may have been a serious blunder because

Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth, is emerging as a substantial figure in the SALT debate. His fierce feelings about the important issue of verification might turn him against the treaty, despite his basic support for arms control. This would be a serious blow to the treaty in the Senate, where chances of obtaining the two-thirds vote required for ratification are very uncertain. Just last week Senate Minority Leader Howard Baker said he was "leaning against" the treaty. Among the issues worrying him: verification.

When SALT will be sent to the Senate is unclear, despite strong indications that the U.S.-Soviet talks are nearly concluded. After a series of meetings in Washington last week with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Soviet Ambassador Anatoli Dobrynin said that an accord was "closer, ever closer, very close." Administration officials were quick to add that the remaining differences could take some time to resolve. The President, for one, was taking no bets on when the talks would end. Said he at a press conference: "After many mistakes, I have promised the public that I would not predict a date for a summit or for the conclusion of the SALT negotiations."

When the talks are finished, verification will become one of the main issues of the ratification debate. It is a problem that Glenn has been concerned about. In November 1977, he asked the State Department for a series of classified charts analyzing the provisions of the proposed SALT II treaty. The documents indicated how each provision could be verified, the reliability of the data and the chances that the Soviets would be able to fool the verification measures.

Glenn at first concluded that the U.S., by using spy satellites and listening posts on the U.S.S.R.'s border, could sufficiently monitor Soviet compliance with the arms pact. But he no longer thinks so. At Groton he said that because of the loss of two CIA intelligence-gathering stations in Iran, "very serious doubts have been cast on our ability to adequately verify the agreements." In the deleted portion of his speech he was going to add that there are major problems with the substitutes the Administration is considering for the lost listening posts. One is to establish ground monitoring sites in other countries bordering on the Soviet Union. But Glenn feels that these nations are too unstable politically to ensure a long-term relationship with the U.S. Another alternative is to send U-2 spy planes, crammed with special electronic gear, flying along the Soviet border. But these

Glenn urges instead—as he was going to tell the Groton audience—that the U.S. put "the decision directly up to the Soviets." He wants Washington to press Moscow for advance notice of missile tests and permission for U.S. flights "along an agreed-upon track, parallel to [the Soviet]

ICBM test-launch range, and over Soviet territory." According to Glenn, the Soviets "must either accommodate to this new and unforeseen intelligence situation or be branded before the world as the party preventing a SALT agreement for reasons of their own secrecy."

The Administration has insisted that such steps are unnecessary because the U.S. has the ability to detect Soviet cheating. Said a senior official at the Pentagon: "I have not the slightest doubt that we'll soon be substantially back to where we were before the loss of the Iranian sites." The official agrees that the Soviets might get away with one more missile than the 2,250 allowed under SALT II; but "this wouldn't be militarily significant. But if they deployed an extra 100, we'd quickly know about it."

As an interim measure, the Pentagon advocates that U-2s regularly patrol the Soviet border, electronically monitoring activity on the Soviets' missile range. By 1984 the U.S. plans to have ready a better solution: a supersophisticated spy satellite that would take detailed photographs and intercept electronic and radio transmissions from missile tests. Knowing what it is like to view the earth from space, Glenn has a high regard for satellites. But the ones needed to verify SALT have not been built. Said Glenn in the deleted portion of his speech: "I do not consider this an adequate replacement [for Iran] at this time."

Glenn's views on verification are widely respected by his colleagues because he has a reputation for doing his homework. Says Nevada Republican Paul Laxalt: "Most Senators are at sea on the technical data of SALT, but Glenn obviously understands it. He will be very persuasive." Still in his freshman term, Glenn has usually taken liberal stands on social issues. But he has been outspokenly critical of the Administration on a number of foreign policy questions. He opposed Carter's plan to withdraw U.S. ground forces from South Korea and urged more "specific measures ... to insure Taiwan's continued freedom to decide its own fate." He

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has been just as firm when dealing personally with the Soviets. During a visit to the European immigrants in Ohio wanted to know if the U.S.S.R. would ever loosen its rule over Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. When a few Soviet officials smiled, Glenn snapped that this was a serious matter.

Smiles have not yet returned to Glenn's relationship with the White House on SALT, but by midweek there was some improvement. The Administration belatedly recognized that it could ill afford to antagonize the Ohio Senator. Declared a White House aide: "We've just got to have Glenn on SALT. He's our friend." And the Senator would like to be accommodating. Said he: "If they can work out something on verification, I will be the greatest proponent of the treaty around here." ■

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